

Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 12, 2016 MEETING
School Committee Room (5th Floor), Town Hall, 333 Washington Street

Commissioners Present:

David King, Chair
Elton Elperin, Vice Chair
Rosemary Battles Foy
Paul Bell
James Batchelor

Commissioners Absent:

Kirstin Gamble Bridier
Wendy Ecker
Giti Ganjei Saeidian
Peter Kleiner

Staff: Marissa Barrett, Greer Hardwicke

Members of the Public: See list

Mr. King began the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

BUSINESS

1. Approval of minutes.

No minutes were submitted for approval.

2. Public Comment (for items not on the agenda)

No public comment.

PUBLIC HEARINGS- LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

6:40 p.m. **81 Walnut Street** (Pill Hill LHD) - Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to install 15 panel solar array at a 10-degree tilt and 19" off the roof (Joel Lamere, applicant).

Ms. Barrett presented the report.

Joel Lamere, the owner, was present for the hearing.

Mr. Lamere presented a new mock-up to install a 15 panel solar array. They have spoken to neighbors where there is some support for the project.

No public comment.

Mr. Elperin asked the applicant if there could be a change of placement for the solar panels to make them less visible.

Mr. Lamere said moving them would be possible, but expressed a concern over having to step out to the roof from the skylight to access them. The number of panels are 100% for electrical and two have been removed from the original plan.

Mr. Bell inquired into what inspired the design and layout.

Mr. Lamere expressed an ability to adapt the design by sliding it to make the solar panels less visible.

Ms. Cunningham, a neighbor, spoke for the project as a solar panel advocate.

Ms. Battles Foy stated she felt that they were somewhat visible, but would support the project with a revised layout.

Mr. Batchelor moved to approve the panels with the revised layout to slide the panels over. Mr. Bell seconded, and the commission:

VOTED unanimously to approve the panels with a revised layout by sliding the panels over to be less visible.

6:55 p.m **9 Walnut Place** (Pill Hill LHD) – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct an approximately 3,187 square foot, two and a half story single family residence with attached 2 car garage, install a wood play structure and construct courtyard walls. (210 Walnut Street Trust c/o John Frank and Brent and Lena Berc, applicants).

Lena & Brent Berc, the applicants and their architects John Mayer and Adam Gillmore, were present for the hearing. Ms. Barrett presented the Local Historic District Report for 9 Walnut Place. The staff stated they have received 5 letters of support and 2 letters of opposition.

Public Comment:

Tom Elwertowski, a resident on Highland Road in the Pill Hill Local District, commented that the design is not in scale with the historic district. Mr. Elwertowski referenced 36 Allston Street as a successful new construction, the “gold standard”. He stated that the building does not have a relationship to the neighboring buildings and that it looks like it belongs in the suburbs. Further, Mr. Elwertowski commented that the mock-up presented would overwhelm the street and not fit.

Rob Zverina, a resident of 67 Walnut Place, expressed concerns over the context of house. Mr. Zverina discussed how it is not in line with the mid-century modern style of the surrounding area. Mr. Zverina expressed further concerns over the context of the seven closest houses; this is a mid-century modern neighborhood. He stated that he felt it is not as historical compared to other neighborhoods. Mr. Zverium is also concerned about the building’s placement, in its rotation and alignment, as well as a concern it should be a traditional detailed house.

Creighton Page, along with his wife Carolyn who was not present at the hearing, residents of 210 Walnut Place, offered support for the project. Mr. Page commented that though different in style from his house at 210 Walnut Street, it is not radically different than other houses on Walnut Place. Specifically, the commission should focus on preserving as much vegetation and aesthetic as possible.

Mr. King discussed the posted site visit, the building placement on the lot, and asked how the applicant decided on the proposed angle. The commission discussed the visibility and general impact on the neighborhood, noting that design appropriateness is important.

John Meyer, the architect for the project, commented that there is a variety of building styles on Walnut Place and they are not designing something that looks like it was built with the other homes. They put a lot of thought into the plan. He stated that it was the landscape architect that suggested the angle in order to save as much existing large trees on site as possible. He also stated there was an issue with the design of the driveway and wanted to keep the trees.

Ms. Battles Foy asked if there is a list of existing trees. She expressed an issue with the height of the building even though it is within zoning. She also stated that there are a range of styles within the street and that other parts of the street share the context, not just the mid-century modern enclave.

The commission discussed the zoning set-backs. Ms. Battles Foy suggested moving it back to improve visibility. She also stated that the first floor looks quite generous. Mr. Bell raised questions over why the third floor is so high, citing it adds mass. Mr. Elperin had a concern over the house looming. He also stated that the corner window was an interesting feature similar to a modern home.

The applicant stated that the height of the building is practical since the family is hoping to have more children and will want to expand.

The commission further discussed the height of the garage and its relative large size compared to house. The applicant stated they have two Subaru Forester cars that need to fit.

For the commission, the garage size raises issues over visibility. There was a discussion over making the garage smaller. Mr. Batchelor suggested finding a way to nestle the design in citing the height of the garage, garage door, windows at corner and the lack of pilasters. He discussed that perhaps it should be further angled.

The commission discussed the bizarre chimneys on Walnut Street but feel the chimney in this design makes the house even taller. The site needs to be considered within the urban context. This house is not to be built in the woods. The design should follow the rules of the street, as most every other house is oriented to the street. Mr. King commented that every foot makes a difference, and he would like to see the house oriented towards the street, slightly lower and the trees preserved.

The commission discussed they would like to see a 3D image, perhaps in sketch up, a scale model and a view from Walnut Street.

The owner commented that they anticipated some small blasting on site where they hit ledge. The applicant stated that they will see if they can shave anything off without changing how the house appears.

Mr. King commented that he felt, if the building was brought down by 1 or 2 feet it could make a difference.

Mrs. Battles Foy moved to send the project to a subcommittee to further work on the project. Mr. Bell seconded, and the commission:

VOTED unanimously send the project to a subcommittee for further work.

The subcommittee members are: Mr. Elperin, Mrs. Battles Foy and Mr. King.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – DEMOLITION

7:40 p.m. **315 Lee Street** – Request to demolish a house (Bessie K. Braude/Estate of Dorothy Edinburg, owner).

Mr. Robert L. Allen Jr. was present as the representative for the applicant. Ms. Barrett presented the statement of significance.

No public comment.

The commission discussed the historical significance of this property. There was consensus that the person whom occupied this house and its history were not significant. A few members of the commission also argued that the architecture is not compelling. The commission expressed a concern over what would go in its place if demolished.

Ms. Battles Foy voiced that the mid-century modern architecture is part of the streetscape in how it nestles into the environment, citing its brick, slate and curious melding give the building personality.

Mr. Batchelor moved to not to uphold the initial determination of historically significant. Mr. Elperin seconded, and the commission voted:

VOTED to not uphold staff's initial determination of significance.

4 in favor (Mr. Bell, Me. King, Mr. Elperin, and Mr. Batchelor) 1 opposed (Ms. Battles Foy)

7:50 p.m. **191 Clyde Street** – Revisions to the approved design for lift of stay (The Country Club, owner).

Rob Olsen and Steve Ballard, the applicant's representatives, were present for the hearing.

Dr. Hardwicke presented the report.

No public comment.

Mr. Ballard stated the project seeks to address an issue with the current beams in the structure as they do not support the planned use as a fitness center. There were specific concerns about vibrations discussed. To support the fitness activity, there is a need to rebuild. The design is based off the old photographs and would remove and replace the 2nd and 1st floor structure. This includes the recreation of the entire front with the goal to restore elements.

The commission discussed the building and its specific design elements. There was an understanding among the commission that the columns on the building were relatively recent, as they were constructed in the 1990s. The proposed design seeks to restore and preserve historical elements and the concern over the rear elevation level and interest in maintaining an oval shape due to the recreation and presence it brings is addressed in the design.

Mr. Elperin moved to accept the revised plan. Mr. Bell seconded, and the commission voted:

VOTED unanimously to approve the requested changes.

8:10 p.m. **187 Woodland Road** – Request to demolish a house (Marcy Lowenstein Beck, owner).

Marcy Lowenstein Beck was present for the hearing.

Dr. Hardwicke presented the report.

Ms. Lowenstein is selling the house and wants all options open as she goes through the demolition process. There is a concern with the condition of the inside of the house needing updates such as air conditioning. The roof is in need of repair as well.

Public Comment:

Penelope Green of 156 Hammond commented that she loves the characteristics of this house and felt that it would be a shame to tear it down.

Mr. King commented that the commission is interested in reviewing the historical significance of the building.

Mr. Elperin described the home as a significant membership Tudor house, placing a heightened value on the building since it is in a group, which gives it more meaning.

Ms. Battles Foy described the building as a wonderful variation Tudor which acts as a placeholder on the street.

Mr. Bell stated he sees the historic value and need to preserve because it gives a feeling of what Brookline is.

The commission discussed that the garage was added to the property and does not need to stay. The walkway and deck were also discussed. Ms. Battles Foy, Mr. Bell and Mr. King comment that they feel the building is significant.

Mr. Bell moved to uphold determination of significance. Mr. Batchelor seconded, and the commission voted:

VOTED unanimously to uphold the staff's initial determination of historical significance and place a one year stay on the building.

Updates

New Business

Prepared by: Ashley Clark

Respectfully submitted by,

Marissa C Barrett